

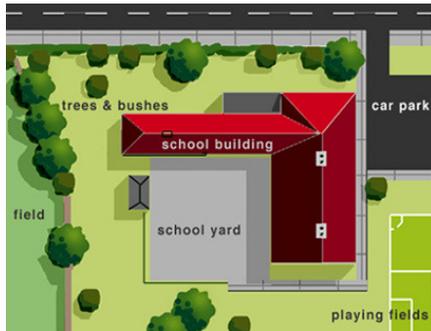
An aerial illustration of a large, multi-decked learning barge on a river. The barge features a covered cabin at the front, a central deck with a yellow floor and a blue basketball court, and a rear deck with a green lawn and a yellow slide. A wooden dock with several pilings is attached to the side, where a group of people is gathered. The background shows a stylized map of a river system in shades of blue and white, with a bird flying in the sky.

## PRE & POST ACTIVITIES

## THE ELIZABETH RIVER PROJECT LEARNING BARGE

# CREATING A SCHOOL YARD MAP & FIELD GUIDE

Utilizing the schoolyard as an outdoor classroom is a great way to gather information about the environment. You can include computers, art, research all while putting science skills to work.



Begin by taking kids outside to sketch a map of the schoolyard. Include building, trees, plants, trashcans, storm drains, parking lot, etc. Throughout the year, have students revisit the map noting changes that have occurred with seasons. For a great connection to the river, students should witness how rain water moves and pools in different areas. This is a great way to discuss how rain pushes chemicals, toxins, oil and more from yards and streets into the river through storm drains.

## FIELD GUIDES

In creating a guide to the schoolyard, students become field researchers always on the lookout for plants, animals and insects.



Showing examples of naturalists' sketchbooks, discussing why the guides are useful and important is a great way to introduce this activity. Students can also make their field guides out of recycled paper and materials.

## DATA BASE

Design a standard template for recording information. Include common name, scientific name, family, student's name, date, location, habitat, unusual features, etc. Consider having categories for plants, animals, insects



## SCHOOLYARD SIGHTINGS

During class, lunch or recess, students can write down what they see and then how they have changed over time. Utilizing the library, students can identify and research their finds.

## ORIGINALITY

Leave room at the bottom of each page for students to draw or past photograph or field samples like leaves. When complete, students could consider donating a copy to the school library for other students to use and enjoy!

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Develop spreadsheets to monitor growth, track the weather noting impacts to habitat, shelter and food sources, keep a log of litter, chemicals and debris found on the property and create an exhibit to display findings.